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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4767  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 1919  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0622  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0864  
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2588  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1006  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4246  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1676  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1525  
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEAHLG/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0113  
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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, INR/IAA; NSC FOR FISK AND  
FEARS; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD; USDOC FOR  
4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC FOR  
3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTIONS #12: RULING PLD GAINS IN  
CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

1. (SBU) This is the 12th cable in a series reporting on the  
Dominican Republic's May 16 congressional and municipal  
elections:

#### Ruling PLD Gains in Congressional Elections

Dominican voters went to the polls May 16 to elect 32  
senators, 178 representatives, 151 mayors and vice mayors,  
and 963 city council members and their substitutes. Only 12  
years after the last fraudulent election, the Dominican  
Republic is still a fragile democracy -- but the voters'  
positive demeanor and enthusiastic participation was an  
important step in fortifying democracy here. Roughly 50% of  
the 5.4 million registered voters turned out. The election  
was well organized, relatively smooth, and showed that the  
electoral process is becoming more reliable. Despite the  
public's disenchantment with a perceived failure of politics  
to deliver good governance, the turnout -- typical of past  
mid-term elections -- shows the Dominican people's continuing  
faith in electoral democracy.

The election police chief, in comments to Embassy the  
afternoon of May 17, characterized the situation throughout  
the country as "calm and under control." There had been one  
violent confrontation between groups of party activists near  
the capital, which left two persons dead and one injured. A  
civic group reported another person killed in a separate  
incident, also in the Santo Domingo area. The chief said  
tension was continuing in some communities where the vote had  
been close and party militants were striving for advantage in  
the count.

The ruling PLD did very well in the congressional elections.  
Partial returns released May 17 show the PLD and its allies  
winning in 16 of the 32 provinces and leading narrowly in 5  
others. The PLD won the symbolically important mayoral and

senatorial races in the capital and the senate seat from the northern regional center, Santiago. An unprecedented alliance between the main opposition PRD and PRSC apparently failed to sustain the opposition's control of Congress. A senior PRSC legislator, who was re-elected, told political officer, "The alliance lost."

The slowness of the Central Elections Board (JCE) in releasing returns has been due to the complexity of these elections and the cumbersome but effective safeguards built into the system of paper balloting and manual tabulation and verification of returns before they are entered into the JCE computer system. Official election results for the lower house of Congress or municipal offices are not yet available.

The most accurate available election figures are from the main cities, based on a quick count by USAID-supported NGO Participacin Ciudadana.

In the National District (Santo Domingo), based on 99% of the quick count sample:

Congressional: PLD and allies, 56.5 %; PRD/PRSC and allies, 39.0 %

Municipal: PLD and allies, 57.8 %, PRD/PRSC and allies, 40.0 %

In Santiago, based on 91% of the quick count sample:

Congressional: PLD and allies, 53.1%; PRD/PRSC and allies, 44.8%

Municipal: PLD and allies, 39.0%; PRD/PRC and allies, 57.2% (a popular PRSC mayor won reelection to a third term)

A clear PLD victory, once returns are complete, will be viewed as a good indication of current President Fernandez's chances to win a new term as president in 2008. He has been an effective, moderate president who has stood up to Venezuelan President Chavez.

The biggest change will occur in the Senate: PLD members will shoot up from 1 of 32 now to a large plurality or a majority. Results for the lower house, where voters could express a preference for individual candidates on a party list, are less clear, but the PLD will pick up strength. Overall, this outcome is likely to give President Fernandez more leverage in getting bills through Congress, with less delay on measures of interest to the United States.

We expect Dominican Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito, a close contact of the Embassy, to be elected senator representing Santiago. He has been an outstanding attorney general, promoting rule of law and serious enforcement. He would be a strong voice for a modernizing and effective Dominican Senate. We do not yet know who would replace him as attorney general.

12. (U) Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

13. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted at our SIPRNET web site (<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo>) along with extensive other material.  
HERTELL